



# EMAIL NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2025

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Dear Sietar India members and supporters,

We are back with the first newsletter for 2025!

With so much information overload on social media, our team decided to rethink our communication and events strategy.

We decided to go with quality rather than quantity and so we will have 2 newsletters a year and each of them will be immensely readable! Our commitment to curating quality content from the Indian subcontinent continues and we delight in presenting various elements ranging from the culinary arts, parenting and expatriation viewed through an Indian lens.

Thanks to our Board member in charge of Events and Newsletters, Dolon Gupta and her young energetic team of interns – Sivapriya and Juveriya, you will notice that this edition has an increased use of visuals and graphics with a view to making our newsletter quick and easy to read while permitting us to reach out to younger generations who are visual rather than text-oriented.

As you can see, Sietar India is committed to moving with the times and bridging generations as well as cultures. Our first webinar for 2025 on May 13th featured a brilliant historian and engineer, Aparajith Ramnath on the topic of the engineering profession in India. He left us with a lot of food for thought – enough for a half-day conference at the very least, if we are to quote one of the delighted participants.

Other priorities on our minds, enhancing our membership drive to bring together all practicing interculturalists in India and those interested in this fascinating discipline and to hold a fantastic conference in the near future.

Do not hesitate to reach out to us at [sietarindia@gmail.com](mailto:sietarindia@gmail.com) to contribute, become a member or just be a friend of Sietar India.

On behalf of the Sietar India team

Sunita Nichani

President, Sietar India



# An interculturalist by any other name

*Radhika Howarth, a food consultant, chef, researcher, culinary storyteller and author of the book *Flavours Without Borders*, shares her insights on how an appreciation of food deepens our intercultural understanding.*

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**Sietar India:** At what point did you become aware that navigating cultures and the understanding of food through the cultural lens is an important part of your work?

**Radhika:** My understanding began in childhood, growing up in an extended family in India where marriages bridged cultures - Kashmiri, Hyderabad Muslim, Tamilian and Bengali. Our kitchen was a melting pot of traditions, rituals and recipes, each with its own story. That early exposure taught me that food is never just about ingredients - it's about identity, memory and belonging.

As a food consultant, chef, researcher and storyteller, I have come to see that navigating cultures and understanding food through a cultural lens is essential. It allows me to honour the roots of a recipe, respect the people behind it and bring out stories that reflect migration, resilience, celebration and community. Food becomes a bridge - between generations, between communities, and between the past and the present. That's what makes the work meaningful.

**Sietar India:** Do you think an appreciation of the culinary culture of others is a gateway to building bridges?

**Radhika:** Absolutely! Food is a universal language that connects. It invites curiosity, connection and cultural empathy. Appreciating another culture's cuisine is often the first step in understanding its people, values and history. It breaks down barriers, opens conversations and creates shared experiences, even across differences. When we sit at a table and taste something unfamiliar, we're not just enjoying flavours - we're engaging with stories of migration, memory and identity. In my work, I've seen how food can dissolve prejudice and build bridges where words sometimes fail.

**Sietar India:** How can your recent book on *Flavours Without Borders* advance our thinking on diversity and inclusion?

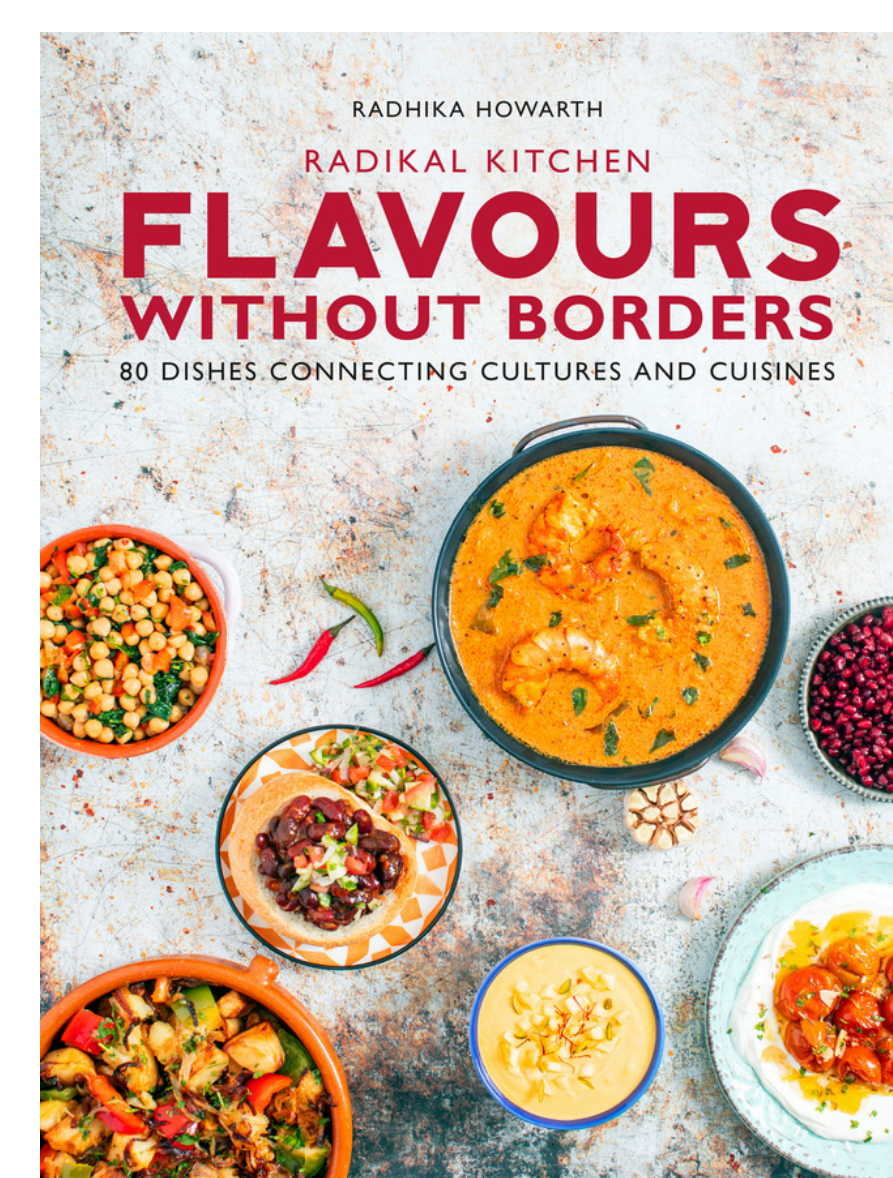
**Radhika:** *Flavours Without Borders* is rooted in the idea that food tells powerful stories of migration, resilience and cultural exchange. By tracing the

**This column features an interview with a professional who is not a professional interculturalist and yet navigates cultural differences as an essential part of their work.**

*journeys of ingredients and recipes across borders - through trade, colonisation and diaspora, my book invites readers to see diversity not as something "added on," but as something deeply embedded in our food history. It highlights how culinary cultures have always adopted and adapted new influences, creating a kind of cultural osmosis that makes our food richer, more vibrant and more reflective of our shared humanity. In doing so, it advances our thinking on inclusion, not just by celebrating difference, but by showing how interconnected and essential that difference has always been.*

**Sietar India:** In what way can food or the rituals around it help us to learn the deeper values of the culture?

**Radhika:** Food and its rituals carry the core values of many cultures - values like sharing, giving and togetherness. Across traditions, meals are more than just nourishment; they are moments of connection. Whether it is breaking bread with others, feeding guests before oneself, or preparing food during festivals, the act of giving becomes a gesture of love, hospitality and community. For example, many food rituals are also rooted in sacrifice - offering the first portion to ancestors, Gods or nature as a sign of gratitude. This speaks to a deep respect for nature and the recognition that food is a gift, not a guarantee. These rituals bring people together across generations, reinforcing the idea that food is not just about survival. It is about values, relationships and the rhythms that bind us to the land, to each other, and to something greater than ourselves.



Instagram:  
[@radikalkitchen](https://www.instagram.com/radikalkitchen)



# LOST IN TRANSLATION (or found)

This column looks at how ideas, words and concepts can be viewed across different languages and cultures.

## Parenting in a Glocal world: A reflection of “Mrs. Chatterjee vs. Norway”

*Here, Ragini Yerragudi reflects on the film. She has a Master's in Counselling Psychology and is a licensed clinical mental health counsellor. A mom to two teenagers, when she is not with her family, she is running parenting groups, intercultural training and consulting with individuals. She has lived and worked in India, USA and Sweden. She likes to put a spotlight on collectivistic paradigms in the fields of mental health and cross-cultural psychology.*

Parenting today can feel like navigating a minefield —perfect meals, perfect vacations, picture-perfect report cards, all under the watchful gaze of social media. Add to this the invisible weight of cultural expectations, and you’ve got the emotional terrain explored in the Bollywood movie, Mrs. Chatterjee vs Norway. For many of us living in a “glocal” world, parenting means constantly adjusting, not just to our children’s evolving needs, but also to shifting cultural norms around us.

Watching Mrs. Chatterjee vs Norway, I wore many hats - that of a licensed mental health professional, an intercultural trainer, and a mother who once moved countries with two small children. Based on a real-life case, the sometimes overly dramatised film follows an Indian mother's battle with Norwegian child welfare services after her children are taken into protective custody. It highlights how well-intentioned but culturally misaligned systems can sometimes clash. Practices like co-sleeping or handfeeding, common in Indian households, are often considered unhealthy and seen as signs of dependency through a Western lens.

I’ve lived this tension first-hand. When my son was born in the United States of America, we were flooded with advice: “He’s not sleeping on his own?” “How will he become independent!” Well-meaning suggestions rooted in different cultural parenting values! We tried sleep training but gave up after five minutes - deciding our child would sleep alone sometime before he left for college! Eventually, he chose his own room, in his own time.

### MRS. CHATTERJEE VS NORWAY



A WOMAN'S FIGHT AGAINST A NATION

17<sup>TH</sup> MARCH  
2023

NOW STREAMING

To be clear, there’s value in adapting one’s parenting styles to other cultures too. My daughter, who attended a Swedish preschool, is fiercely independent, having learned to take initiative and responsibility early. These are traits we celebrate as well. To quote Esther Wojcicki, “To parent across cultures is to live in a world of both/and, not either/or.”

Parenting, as with most things in life, is never black and white. Watching the film, I saw not just cultural gaps, but the possible weight of economic hardship, neurodiversity, and even domestic violence - all factors that complicate parenting. In real life, there are few heroes or villains, mostly people trying to do their best with the resources and understanding that they have.

In this “glocal” world, parenting support systems must reflect cultural complexity. It’s time we stop assuming one-size-fits-all norms. Instead, we must reflect on what truly matters - being present, leading with both head and heart, and supporting each other without judgment.



# INTERCULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS

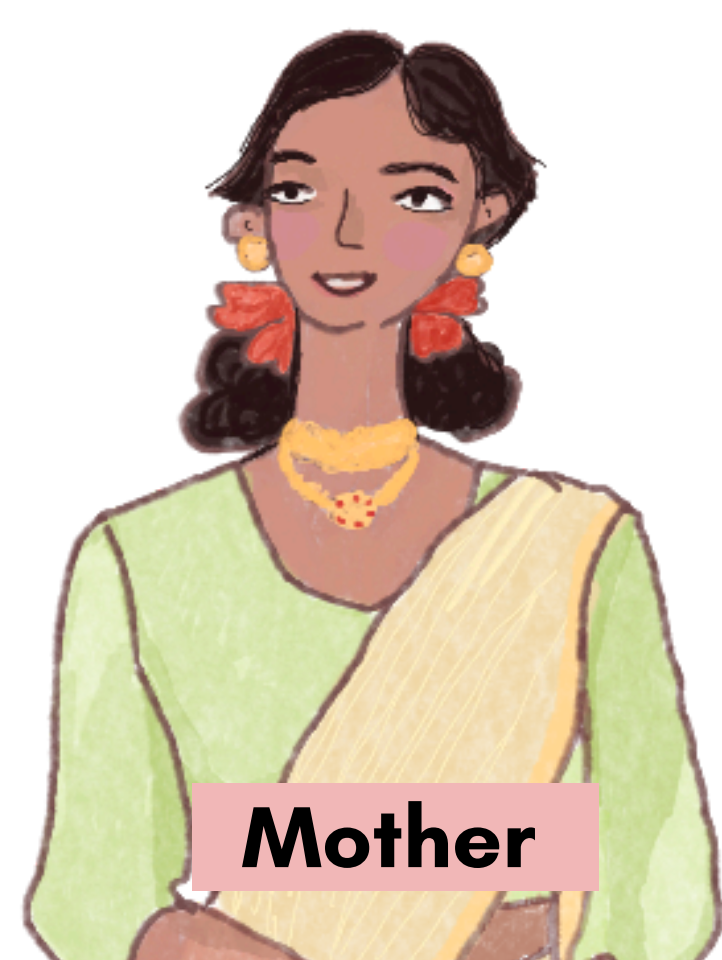
This section is based on interviews with those who live across cultures inside their own homes; experience it first-hand in their personal lives.

## Third Culture Kids

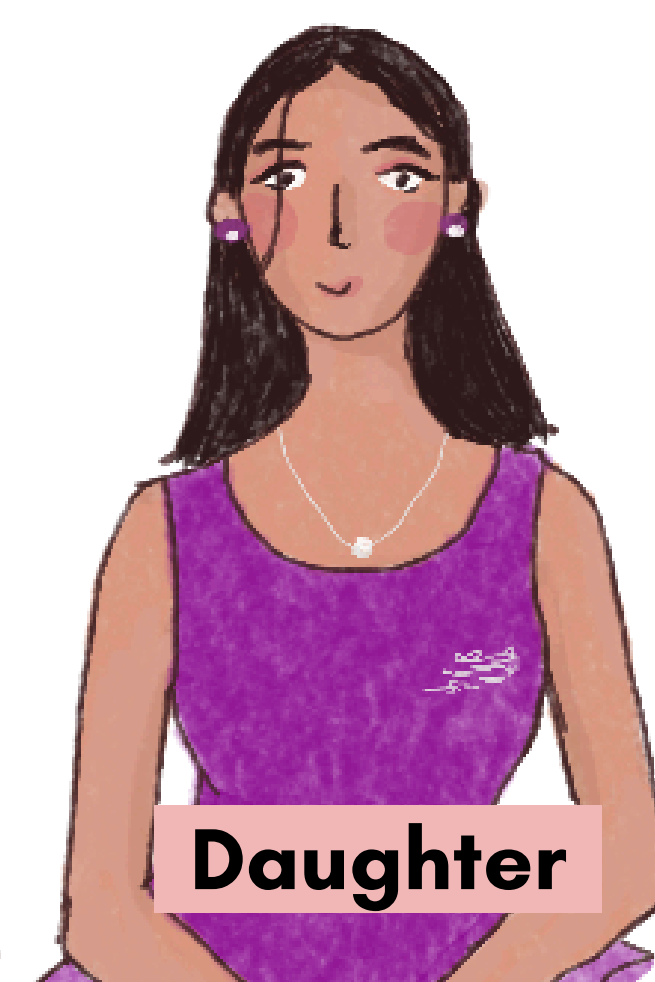
Here, we explore the parent-child relationship – the highs and lows of third culture kids and their parents.

*Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Rajakumar, 52 years old, works for Lloyds Banking as a Customer Journey manager. She moved to London in 2013 from Bangalore. Her daughter Meenakshi Rajakumar, who is 18 years old, is a first-year medical student at Cambridge University.*

Raising my child in London has been a blessing — top schools, museums, parks, and endless after-school activities. It's a city that sparks curiosity and independence, with green spaces and great transport making family life feel balanced and full of possibility.



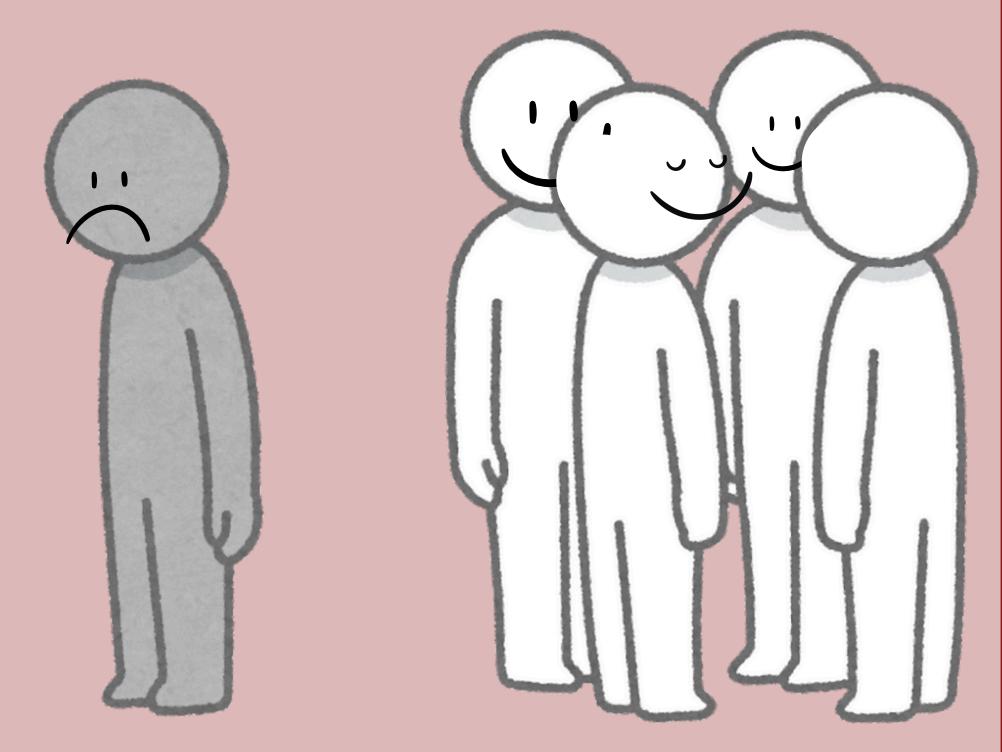
Growing up in vibrant, multicultural London meant I never had to choose between cultures. I spoke six languages, celebrated both Diwali and Christmas, and felt proud of my Indian roots while being part of a wider British community. My background wasn't a barrier — it made my life fuller, more connected, and full of possibilities.



Raising a child in London hasn't been easy. Safety is a constant worry, and being far from extended family, especially grandparents, makes it harder without that emotional support and shared caregiving.



Even in diverse London, balancing two cultures wasn't always easy. At home, it was all about Indian values — respect, modesty, family — but at school, self-expression ruled. I often felt like I was code-switching, trying to belong in both worlds. And behind it all was the pressure to succeed, to honour my parents' sacrifices. It could feel heavy, especially when no one around truly understood.





# IT'S INDIA ONLY

This section turns the spotlight on language – Indian English, how Indians use language, and words that reflect typical Indian traits.

LOKESH IS ON DEPUTATION AT THE LONDON OFFICE. AN IMPORTANT MEETING WITH HIS MANAGER (CHRIS) IS IN PROGRESS...



## What happened???

Issues can mean 'challenges' or 'problems'. Chris used the word in that sense. In India, many use the word 'issues' as a synonym for 'children'. Lokesh is taken aback as to why Chris is asking how many children he has, in the middle of an important meeting. Hence, Lokesh hesitates but responds.

Now it's Chris' turn to be taken aback - he cannot make sense of the response that the two challenges Lokesh faces at work, in London, are connected with his wife in India.

## JUGAAD

A commonly used term in India that signifies a quick fix solution through frugal resources. More than that, a mindset of managing things that is akin to winging it, by hook or by crook. An innovative approach that has become so ingrained in public consciousness that it is today seen as an Indian virtue.







## SOCIETY FOR INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION, TRAINING & RESEARCH

The Society for Intercultural Education Training and Research (SIETAR) - India is a non-profit association of educators, researchers and trainers from a wide range of practical and academic disciplines who share a common concern for intercultural relations. SIETAR-India provides an opportunity to learn from and share with colleagues in the intercultural arena and advance the body of knowledge and practice in the field.

Established in 1974, SIETAR has over 3500 members world-wide with affiliates in many countries. SIETAR holds Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) status with the United Nations and the Council of Europe. SIETAR - India is part of the global network of SIETAR organizations.

### Contact Us

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For more information or to submit a guest article please send us an email.

## OUR TEAM

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